

Effects of Language Contact on Hawaiian: A Brief Review

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This paper discusses the influence of immigrant languages, especially English, on Hawaiian. Shortly after the Hawaiian ‘first contact’ with Western culture, immigrants from all over the world arrived on the Hawaii islands, mainly from the 1850s to the 1910s. This brought two types of changes to Hawaiian: the rise of Pidgin Hawaiian and changes to Indigenous Hawaiian. First, the grammatical characteristics of Pidgin Hawaiian are introduced based on previous research. Second, the influence of contact on Hawaiian’s lexicon, types of written texts, and grammar are addressed. Although lexical influence and the rise of different types of texts written in Hawaiian are relatively salient, the grammatical influence is more difficult to recognize. This paper attempts to investigate it with numerical data related to “directionals” and the “(so-called) nominalizer” in Hawaiian. The results are not clear; thus, it is suggested that a newer approach may be required to more accurately evaluate the influence of language contact.

Keywords: Hawaiian, language contact, grammatical description, Pidgin Hawaiian, modern Hawaiian

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1. Brief history of language and immigration in Hawaii

There have been several major languages spoken in Hawaii between the 18th century and today, and there is no doubt that currently English has the largest number of speakers, but Hawaii’s Indigenous language is Hawaiian. Hawaiian is an Austronesian language, which is reported to be the primary language for about 26,000 people, according to the U.S. census 2009–2013.¹

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¹ “Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over: 2009–2013” in 2009–2013 American Community Survey <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2013/demo/2009-2013-lang-tables.html> (Accessed: 2019-08-04).

Hawaiian is one of the endangered languages of the Pacific area, though it is also known as a relatively successful example of the language revitalization movement. Thus, its reported number of speakers has been increasing in the census, as noted above, but very few of these speakers actually use it as their L1 language.

The first contact of the Hawaiian people with Caucasians was the visit by Captain Cook and his crew in 1778.² At that time, the Hawaiian Islands were under the process of political unification. Several decades later, in 1810, one of the chiefs, Kamehameha I finally unified all of the islands and established the Kingdom of Hawaii. In those days, many Western merchant ships came to visit the islands. And in the 1820s, Christian missionaries, mainly protestant missionaries from New England, began to arrive and work there.

The missionaries' arrival was a turning point for the Hawaiian language because they investigated the Polynesian languages and introduced the writing system and printing into Hawaii, which had been a culture of oral tradition and thus had no writing system. These new technologies had a great effect on Hawaiian record-keeping, writing, and publication. In the same period, many ships visited Hawaii as part of the whaling industry. After a while, in the mid-1830s, the sugar industry began to expand. This led to a huge shift in the ethnic makeup of Hawaii.

In the mid-19th century, the demographic situation began to change rapidly. Sugar plantations needed a lot of laborers, and people all over the world came to the islands. First people from China (1850s³), then Pacific islanders and Japanese people (1860s), came to live there. Portuguese (1870s), Norwegian, and German immigrants (1880s) followed. At the beginning of the 20th century, Puerto Rican, Korean, Filipino, and Russian immigrants, as well as people from some African nations, all arrived. In this way, the Hawaiian ethnic constitution was dramatically changed in a relatively short time.

From a political point of view, during this period of immigration, the status of the Hawaiian Indigenous people (and the status of their native Hawaiian language) became increasingly weak. In fact, starting at least in the 1850s, Hawaiian royals and political leaders considered English as an important language and they established the school for royal children, where Caucasian teachers spoke to their pupils (many of them were future political leaders) in English. Around the middle of the 19th century, as Euro-Americans increased their political and economic power, English officially took the place of Hawaiian: in 1870, English became the official language for public documents.

² Schütz (1995) describes the Hawaiian linguistic history in detail; the historical description in this section is largely based on Schütz (1995) and on Goto, Matsubara and Shionoya (2004).

³ The years of immigration given in this paper either indicate the first wave or the official beginning of the immigration.

After the kingdom was overthrown in 1893, Hawaiian was not used in schools. In fact, many people attested that the teachers banned children from speaking Hawaiian in those days. As a result, Hawaiian largely lost its status as an L1, and English replaced it entirely.

This situation remains essentially unchanged today. However, before the rise of English, that is, until the early 20th century, people with Hawaiian ancestry used Hawaiian daily.

J. Roberts (1995), in a study on Pidgin Hawaiian, argues there were four major language varieties on the islands in the middle of the 19th century. First, of course, Indigenous people spoke Hawaiian. Second, English also had a strong presence, but aside from royals or the upper class, Hawaiians and people of the other ethnic groups were rarely fluent English speakers. Third, as noted above, there were a lot of immigrants from various countries, so their own languages were used at home or within their own communities. Fourth, though Pidgin English had previously been thought to be the lingua franca, J. Roberts (1995) and S. Roberts (2013) showed that, at first, inter-ethnic communication both inside and outside of the plantations used Pidgin Hawaiian, which was later gradually replaced by Pidgin English.

2. Types of influence

There are various types of consequences of the language contact that occurred in Hawaii in the early 20th century, the final period when Hawaiian was used as a daily language. This paper only considers the influence on Hawaiian, though there are many other results of contact, as well, such as Hawaiian Pidgin English.⁴

Two outcomes of the contact will be considered here. First, the emergence of Pidgin Hawaiian, and second, the way that Hawaiian itself was affected and changed to some extent. As mentioned above, Hawaiian originally had an oral tradition. Furthermore, the types of existing early documents are largely influenced by Western culture. Thus, in addition to grammatical and lexical changes, the emergence of a new concept, the written text format, should be considered an important part of the linguistic change in Hawaiian.

3. Pidgin Hawaiian

3.1. Emergence, spread and decline

The existence of Pidgin Hawaiian itself is evidence of the language contact, as of course, the pidgin language would not exist without it.

⁴ There are many previous studies on Hawaiian Pidgin English. For example, many Japanese words in Hawaiian English have been found to come from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi dialects (Sakoda and Siegel 2003).

Pidgin Hawaiian has been studied and described using written data from old interviews with speakers and, more importantly, criminal court records that include testimonies by the residents at that time.

Two previous studies (J. Roberts 1995; S. Roberts 2013) have proposed the following history of the language. Pidgin Hawaiian originated around the 1800s when Caucasians first arrived on the islands. Their purpose of visiting was trade, so Hawaiians and Europeans mainly met at the ports and talked with each other in Pidgin Hawaiian, although in those days long-term immigrant residents were rare. After a few decades, the major purpose of foreigner visits changed to the whaling, and during this period the Hawaiian people began to work on board the whaling ships as crew members. Thus they and the Euro-American crew members came to spend more time together than before, and they talked in Pidgin Hawaiian more frequently.⁵

This was followed by the wave of immigrants from non-Anglophone countries who began to rush into Hawaii. These newcomers mostly became workers on the sugar plantations. In this early period, when newcomers arrived, they learned Pidgin Hawaiian as a *lingua franca*. According to S. Roberts (2013), “in the 1880s and 1890s, Pidgin Hawaiian served as the primary inter-ethnic contact medium on plantations and elsewhere” (S. Roberts 2013: 120).

After the 1900s, with the Hawaiian language losing its power, newer waves of immigrants came to learn Pidgin English. This was the beginning of the Hawaiian Pidgin English era, which continues today. Even though the transition started from this early period and spread rapidly in urban areas like Honolulu, in rural areas, the change from Pidgin Hawaiian to Hawaiian Pidgin English proceeded more slowly.

3.2. Features of Pidgin Hawaiian

Some grammatical features of Pidgin Hawaiian have been described by previous research. The word order, SVO, is different from Standard Hawaiian’s verb-initial order. In addition, the object marker, along with many other case markers, is not used in Pidgin Hawaiian.

Hawaiian, which means Standard Hawaiian here, belongs to the Eastern Polynesian branch of the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup; its most closely related languages are Marquesan, Mangareva, Tahitian, Maori, and so on. Hawaiian has been described as an isolated language and its basic word order is VSO. There are five short vowels / i e a o u /, five long vowels / ī ē ā ō ū / (indicated by macrons), and the following diphthongs: / iu ei eu ae ao au ai oi ou āi āu āe āo ēi ōu /. There are relatively few consonants: / h, k, l, m, p, w [v~w], n, ‘[ʔ] /.

⁵ According to previous studies, during the same period, an early version of Hawaiian Pidgin English emerged at the port areas of the islands.

The articles are all very different from those of Standard Hawaiian. The definite article *kēlā* derives from the distal demonstrative in Standard Hawaiian. And the Pidgin Hawaiian indefinite singular article *‘akahi* means ‘one’ in Standard Hawaiian, and the plural article *kekahi* means ‘some’ in the standard variety.

The tense-aspect marking system is also entirely different compared to standard Hawaiian. All Standard Hawaiian particles have disappeared, and instead tense-aspect is marked by adverbs. Another verb-marking system, that of directionals, which indicate the direction of movement, has been partly changed. Standard Hawaiian’s vertical *a’e* ‘up’ and *iho* ‘down’ have been replaced by *maluna* and *malalo* in Pidgin Hawaiian. In the standard variety, *maluna* means ‘on top of’, and *malalo* means ‘below’.

Table 1 Differences between Standard Hawaiian and Pidgin Hawaiian
(based on Elbert and Pukui 1979; J. Roberts 1995; S. Roberts 2013)

	Standard Hawaiian		Pidgin Hawaiian	
Word order	VSO		SVO	
Object marker	<i>i</i>		Ø	
Articles	Definite SG Definite PL	<i>ka/ke</i> <i>nā</i>	Definite	<i>kēlā</i>
	Indefinite	<i>he</i>	Indefinite SG Indefinite PL	<i>‘akahi</i> <i>kekahi</i>
Tense-aspect marking	Particle	<i>ke/e</i> (present)	Adverb	<i>kēia manawa</i> (present)
		<i>ua/i</i> (perfective)		<i>mamua/kēlā manawa</i> (past)
		<i>e</i> (imperfective)		<i>mamuli/mahope</i> (future)
Direction-of-movement marking	‘hither’	<i>mai</i>	‘hither’	<i>mai</i>
	‘thither’	<i>aku</i>	‘thither’	<i>aku</i>
	‘upward’	<i>a’e</i>	‘up’	<i>maluna</i>
	‘downward’	<i>iho</i>	‘down’	<i>malalo</i>

As a whole, these different grammatical characteristics indicate that Pidgin Hawaiian grammar is relatively simplified, like that of other typical pidgins. For example, distal demonstrative in Standard Hawaiian, *kēlā*, is used as definite article as well as a part of tense marking adverbs in Pidgin Hawaiian. In other words, *kēlā* becomes more “polysemous” in Pidgin Hawaiian grammatical systems, thus in this respect, Pidgin Hawaiian grammar is simpler than its standard variation.

4. Influence on Hawaiian

4.1. Lexical influence

The second type of language contact in Hawaii relates to the effects on Hawaiian itself. Through the contact with non-Polynesian cultures, many new items and ideas came to the

islands. As is often the case with such events, Hawaiian accepted a great deal of loanwords from immigrant languages, with most of them coming from English. The most comprehensive Hawaiian dictionary, Pukui and Elbert (1986), contains such words in abundance. Due to the open syllabic system and its system of fewer consonants, the Hawaiian loanwords look very different from the original English words. Here are some examples:

- (1) *kelepona* ‘telephone’, *Kimo* ‘Jim’, *male* ‘marry’, *mākeke* ‘market’, *peni* ‘pen’, *pepa* ‘paper’, *pāka* ‘park’, *Ianuali* ‘January’

Some words derived from other languages such as Portuguese, Chinese or Japanese, though there are fewer of these compared to those of English origin.⁶

- (2) Words from Portuguese:
pakaliao [bacalhau] ‘cod fish’, *pīpīnola* [pepineiro] ‘a kind of squash’
- (3) Words from Chinese:
kamakū [samshu (三燒)] ‘a Chinese liquor’, *konohi* [kong-hee (恭喜)] ‘congratulations’] ‘Chinese new year’
- (4) Words from Japanese:⁷
kalikona [daikon] ‘radish’, *kamapoko* [kamaboko] ‘boiled fish paste’, *lokeni* [roten] ‘street stall’, *kekohara* [sekuhara] ‘sexual harassment’

Although the syllable structure of Hawaiian relatively resembles that of Japanese, the words borrowed from Japanese also look different than their originals because Hawaiian lacks *t*, *d*, *b* and *s*.

4.2. Rise of the new written form of Hawaiian

Before contact, Hawaiian had an oral tradition. Indigenous Hawaiians used verses or chanting to pass down important Indigenous stories. Thus, aside from some sporadic pictographs found on some islands, they did not use a writing system. After Christian missionaries introduced and spread the writing system, Hawaiian speakers produced many kinds of documents which were entirely new to them. These documents originated from Western culture. First of all, Bibles were translated in parallel with the establishment of the writing system. This was followed by the emergence of official and public

⁶ Words written in brackets are the likely original words. Note that there are some letters which are not used in Standard Hawaiian. The condition of selection between replacement to the native sounds and using foreign sounds are not clear.

⁷ These words are listed only in the “Modern Hawaiian Vocabulary” dictionary (Kōmike Hua’ōlelo, Hale Kuamo’o and ‘Aha Pūnana Leo 2003) though dates are not given for when they appeared.

documents: newspaper articles, constitutions, laws and legal documents, and textbooks of many subjects for education. These are radically different from previous Hawaiian literature because of the nature of their prose and non-colloquial style. Furthermore, newspapers, legal texts, and educational books were considerably western in nature. Consequently, even though they have not been amply linguistically analyzed so far, it is quite likely that Hawaiian would have broadened its register and acquired some new linguistic features.

Moreover, the production of private texts, such as personal letters, diaries, and various kinds of closed records like those of family history, lineage, or traditional chants, also began to increase. Even these cultural texts could not escape the impact of English, because they were more or less intended to record and pass on information to others or to offspring using the writing system, which was very new to Hawaiian culture.

4.3. Grammatical influence

Compared to the two types of influences considered above, the grammatical effects on Hawaiian are not as apparent. Iwasaki (2018) investigated whether there are any grammatical differences between the Hawaiian of two different time periods, specifically, Hawaiian from the so-called “daily-use period” (late 19th to early 20th century) and so-called Modern Hawaiian (used after the 1970s, the years of the Hawaiian renaissance). The “daily-use period” is the time when Hawaiian began to be written while indigenous people used their native language on a daily basis. As noted in section 1, after this period English became the dominant language in Hawaii and Hawaiian became obsolete. After that most people did not use Hawaiian until 1970s, but due to the revitalization process, new generation of Hawaiian speaker who learn Hawaiian in Universities or local schools emerged. These facts considered, I suggested that there would be a kind of discontinuity between (i) pre-English generations that inherit Hawaiian from their parents as a native tongue and (ii) newer generations that learn Hawaiian mainly from the school teachers, not from their families or relatives.

Iwasaki (2018) focused on two elements,⁸ the first of which is *‘ana*. This functional word is often described as “the element which corresponds to the *‘-ing’* in English”. The followings are some examples of *‘ana*.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-------------|------|------|
| (5) a. hele | → | ka | hele | ‘ana |
| go | | DET | go | ‘ANA |
| ‘go’ | | ‘the going’ | | |

⁸ Iwasaki (2018) was based on the same data used for the author’s doctoral thesis, which discussed the function words of Hawaiian. In this thesis, *‘ana* and directional were especially focused, so there are plenty of data to compare with those of Modern Hawaiian. For this reason, these two elements are used to analysis here.

- b. ho‘omaka → ka ho‘omaka ‘ana
 begin DET begin ‘ANA
 ‘begin’ ‘the beginning’
- c. i kona hele ‘ana
 PREP POSS.3SG go ‘ANA
 ‘When he went’ (Hopkins 1992: 86)⁹
- (6) pau ka ‘ai ‘ana a Lohi‘au mā
 finish DET eat ‘ANA POSS L. PL
 ‘Eating by Lohi‘au and his friends finished” (Ho‘oulumāhiehie 2006: 13)

The second element investigated was that of directionals. This category includes four words (*mai* ‘toward the speaker’, *aku* ‘away from the speaker’, *a’e* ‘upward’ and *iho* ‘downward’) that follow the verb and convey the relative direction of movement. So, in contrast to *‘ana*, the directionals have no apparent counterpart in English. The followings are some examples of directionals.

- (7) a hele mai lākou no Hawai‘i nei
 and come/go DIR 3PL PREP H. DEM
 “and they came here from Hawai‘i.” (Ho‘oulumāhiehie 2006: 51)
- (8) ua hele aku lākou nei ma ke ala hele
 TA move DIR 3PL DEM PREP DET road come/go
 “they went on the road” (Ho‘oulumāhiehie 2006 :52)

Before this analysis, it was expected that newer generations of writers would continue, or would be even more eager, to use *‘ana* because many of them also speak English, which has the similar element, *‘-ing’*, that occurs with high frequency. However, the results are difficult to interpret because even though the supposition was right to some extent, the difference is very little as seen in Table 2.^{10 11}

⁹ All Hawaiian examples are glossed by the author.

¹⁰ Tables 2 and 3 are based on the data used in Iwasaki (2018). All texts are stories written in prose. Ho‘oulumāhiehie (2006) is a Hawaiian mythical story which was originally published on the newspapers from 1905 to 1906. Elbert (1959) is a selection from Hawaiian folktales collection compiled by Abraham Fornander that is collected during 1860–1870s and published in the later 1910s. Carroll (2012) is a recent translation of “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”.

¹¹ The reason for the difference between the supposition and the result is not found yet. Of course it is possible that simply *‘ana* has been not affected by the chronical or linguistic environmental change of Hawaiian. In any case, further investigation and discussion are needed.

Table 2 Occurrence of *'ana* in the Hawaiian in two periods

	Daily-use period Hawaiian (late 19th to early 20th century)		Modern Hawaiian (after the 1970s)
Titles [tokens]	Ho'oulu māhiehie (2006) [92215]	Elbert (1959) [19893]	Carroll (2012) [35916]
Occurrence of <i>'ana</i>	988	176	461
Frequency	1.071%	0.884%	1.284%

As for the directionals, it was expected that their frequency of use would have decreased with time because there are no corresponding elements in English. The results seem to confirm this prediction, though they are still not particularly clear.

Table 3 Occurrence of directionals in Hawaiian in two periods

	Daily-use period Hawaiian (late 19th to early 20th century)				Modern Hawaiian (after the 1970s)	
Titles [tokens]	Ho'oulu māhiehie (2006) [92215]		Elbert (1959) [19893]		Carroll (2012) [35916]	
	Occurrence	Frequency	Occurrence	Frequency	Occurrence	Frequency
<i>mai</i>	1295	1.40%	229	1.15%	362	1.01%
<i>maila</i> ¹²	621	0.67%	129	0.65%	172	0.48%
<i>aku</i>	1109	1.20%	175	0.88%	173	0.48%
<i>akula</i> ¹²	572	0.62%	211	1.06%	291	0.81%
<i>a'e</i>	430	0.47%	41	0.21%	54	0.15%
<i>a'ela</i> ¹²	347	0.38%	72	0.36%	68	0.19%
<i>iho</i>	225	0.24%	32	0.16%	77	0.21%
<i>ihola</i> ¹²	264	0.29%	126	0.63%	66	0.18%
Totals	4863	5.27%	1015	5.10%	1340	3.73%

Yet another example of the grammatical influence of English on Hawaiian has been identified. Shionoya (2004) reported an “ungrammatical” utterance by a Hawaiian immersion school student.¹³

- (9) He aha kēia mea no?
 DET what DEM thing PREP
 “What is this for?” (Shionoya 2004: 242)

The equivalent sentence in the standard variety would be “*He aha kēia?*”, because prepositions cannot be used without a noun in Hawaiian. Shionoya says the child used the Hawaiian preposition *no* based on the model of English.

¹² The directionals with *-la* (derived from the post-posed pronoun *la*) are generally described as variations of those without *-la*. Their basic meanings and functions are the same whether or not *-la* occurs; a more accurate description has been attempted but is yet to be established.

¹³ Note that the teachers would not find this utterance grammatical and would try to correct it.

5. Further questions: evaluation of the influence

This paper has explored some of the influences of immigrant languages on Hawaiian. Previously the effect of language contact on Hawaiian grammar has been rarely discussed. The investigation and analysis with quantitative data shown on this paper broaden the perspective of Hawaiian linguistics. In addition, some differences of two grammatical elements are found between two varieties, that is, Hawaiian of pre-English generations and that of newer generations after 1970s.

These topics have not been fully investigated yet; further research is needed. In addition, one further and broader problem should be noted. Some of the influences of language contact can be recognized, while others are difficult to see. In linguistic papers, especially in attempts to describe grammar, it tends to be suggested that a particular change occurred “due to the influence of language A.” In most cases, this may be reasonable and accurate. However, thus far no general and strict technique has been developed to objectively evaluate the influence of one language on another, nor is there any consensus on when a change can be said to have occurred “due to the influence of” a specific language. These simple but difficult questions should continue to be carefully considered for more convincing arguments. In that respect, grammatical description can learn much from the rich store of knowledge in sociolinguistic studies.

Abbreviations

3	third person	PL	plural
‘ANA	particle ‘ana	POSS	possessive
DET	determiner	PREP	preposition
DEM	demonstrative	SG	singular
DIR	directional	TA	tense-aspect marker

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